

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

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SUBJ: SOVIET-TONGAN-NEW ZEALAND RELATIONS

REF: SUVA 438

SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR'S MOST RECENT VISIT TO NUKU ALOFA INDICATES THAT KING OF TONGA IS VERY CAUTIOUS ABOUT OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE FROM SOVIET UNION. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, NEW ZEALAND'S TIGHT IMMIGRATION POLICIES HAVE SEVERELY CUT DOWN ON ONE OF MAIN TRADITIONAL SOURCES OF TONGAN FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS, I.E. REMITTANCES FROM TONGAN WORKERS IN NEW ZEALAND. THE RESULTING FINANCIAL STRAIN ON TONGA MAKES POTENTIAL SOVIET AID HARD TO RESIST. SITUATION SEEMS SERIOUS ENOUGH TO WARRANT DISCUSSION AT FORTHCOMING ANZUS COUNCIL MEETING. END OF SUMMARY.

1. MY JUST CONCLUDED VISIT TO NUKU ALOFA TO ATTEND WEDDING IN ROYAL FAMILY WAS JUST AS TIMELY AS MY VISIT TO TONGA LAST APRIL. AT THAT TIME FIRST AMBASSADOR

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OF SOVIET UNION TO TONGA HAD JUST PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS

AND MADE ATTRACTIVE OFFER OF ASSISTANCE TO KING. ON LATEST VISIT RUSSIAN FISHERIES DELEGATION ARRIVED IN NUKU ALOFA WHILE I WAS THERE. MOST RECENT VISIT OFFERED ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH THE KING, THE PRIME MINISTER, THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, THE SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT, AND OTHER TONGAN OFFICIALS. I ALSO HAD DISCUSSIONS WITH PRIME MINISTER OF FIJI, PRESIDENT OF NAURU, PREMIER OF NOUMEA AND OTHER HIGH RANKING OFFICIALS OF PACIFIC ISLAND NATIONS WHO WERE ALSO IN NUKU ALOFA.

2. THE KING TOLD ME THAT HE AND PRIME MINISTER EFI OF WESTERN SAMOA HAD AGREED WHEN THEY MET SEVERAL WEEKS AGO TO DISCUSS SOVIET OFFERS OF AID BEFORE EITHER OF THEM MADE ANY COMMITMENTS. A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KING HAD RETURNED TO APIA WITH PRIME MINISTER EFI AND REMAINED THERE DURING THE SOVIET VISIT TO WESTERN SAMOA. WHEN I ASKED THE KING ABOUT SOVIET OFFERS TO WESTERN SAMOA, HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD, "THE SOVIETS WERE MOST SPECIFIC CONCERNING THEIR REQUIREMENTS BUT EXTREMELY VAGUE IN THEIR OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE".

3. THE KING WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE SOVIETS WERE ANXIOUS FOR A SOUTH PACIFIC PORT INTO WHICH THEY COULD BRING THEIR FISHING FLEET DURING CERTAIN TIMES OF YEAR. SOVIETS WANTED TO BE ABLE TO LEAVE THEIR FISHING SHIPS FOR REPAIRS AND TRANSPORT THEIR FISHING CREWS BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN VLADIVOSTOK AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC.

4. THE KING MADE A SPECIAL POINT OF LETTING ME KNOW THAT HE HAD BEEN BUSY READING ALL THE BOOKS HE COULD GET HIS HANDS ON ABOUT COMMUNISM IN GENERAL AND THE SOVIET UNION IN PARTICULAR. HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED THREE BOOKS OF RUSSIAN AUTHOR SOLZHENITSYN INCLUDING "THE GULG ARCHIPELAGO" AND "ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF IVAN DENISOVITCH".

5. BOTH TONGA AND WESTERN SAMOA ARE BADLY IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF NEW ZEALAND'S SEVERELY RESTRICTIVE IMMIGRATION
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POLICIES INSTITUTED BY PRESENT NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. VERY FEW TONGAN WORKERS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GO TO NEW ZEALAND SINCE PRESENT GOVERNMENT CAME TO POWER LAST NOVEMBER. NOT ONLY HAVE REMITTANCES FROM NEW ZEALAND, WHICH AT MORE THAN FIVE MILLION DOLLARS PER YEAR ACCOUNT FOR ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF TONGA'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS, FALLEN DISASTROUSLY, BUT YOUNG TONGANS ARE HANGING AROUND THE ISLANDS IN AN IDLE

CONDITION. THIS OBVIOUSLY IS A SOURCE OF GREAT CONCERN TO THE KING.

6. COMMENT. THE PRESENT RESTRICTIVE IMMIGRATION POLICIES OF NEW ZEALAND, ESPECIALLY AS THEY APPLY TO TONGA AND WESTERN SAMOA ARE CREATING AN UNCERTAIN SITUATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES AND LEAVING A POTENTIAL OPENING TO THE SOVIET UNION.

7. COMMENT CONTINUED: THE GENERAL QUESTION OF BOTH SOVIET AND CHINESE PENETRATION OF THIS AREA OF THE PACIFIC IS A QUESTION THAT COULD USEFULLY BE RAISED AT THE FORTHCOMING ANZUS MEETINGS IN CANBERRA SO THAT THE FULL IMPLICATIONS OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS MAY BE EXPLORED AMONG FRIENDS. END COMMENT.

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